

WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!

July 16, 2009

Vol. 51, No. 28

50¢

IN SOLIDARITY WITH GAZA

Aid convoy to defy Israeli blockade

By John Parker
Cairo, Egypt

July 6—The first delegation of Viva Palestina USA flew with British MP George Galloway on July 4 to Cairo, where 200 people and a convoy of trucks carrying millions of dollars worth of medical supplies will drive to the border of Gaza. The delegation will demand entry into that territory, whose people have been denied basic necessities due to the Israeli blockade.

Delegates spent the previous day packing materials and had to unpack them at the airport and get them on the plane.

Wearing blue T-shirts with the Palestinian flag on them, the delegates remain identifiable to all who see them, both at JFK airport in New York from where they left and here in Egypt, where the reception has been good.

According to a mainstream newspaper passed out on our EgyptAir flight titled "Israel mulling easing Gaza embargo, report says," Israel's Defense Ministry has recommended a partial lifting of the embargo on Gaza as a goodwill gesture toward the Palestinians in order to spur along talks to free an Israeli soldier held by the Hamas government in Gaza.

However, Hamas will not release him without getting in return the many political prisoners languishing in Israeli jails, which has increased by more than 20 since the Israeli kidnapping of Cynthia McKinney and the other international delegates and crew on the Spirit of Humanity outside of Israeli waters on June 30.

The article stated that Israel would increase supplies of coffee, tea, soups, meat, fish and canned goods and renew shipments of fuel, clothing, kitchenware and egg-laying chickens into Gaza ahead of Ramadan, which begins in August.

This is to be linked to progress being made to release the Israeli soldier.

Even if one were to believe that this negotiation by Israel is genuine, the products mentioned do not include some of the most

CYNTHIA MCKINNEY BACK HOME Activists freed from Zionist jail 8

essential, like steel and concrete necessary to rebuild the 47,000 homes damaged in the recent war by Israel, according to an Al Jazeera reporter in Gaza on June 27, or half of the hospitals destroyed.

The International Committee of the Red Cross reported on June 29 that those living in Gaza are "trapped in despair." The report states that the people of Gaza, whose homes were destroyed during Israel's 23-day blitzkrieg, are still without shelter despite pledges of almost \$4.5 billion in aid. This is because Israel refuses to allow cement and other building material into the Gaza Strip.

But the genocide by Israel does not stop at denying building construction. The report exposes that Israel is keeping patients from receiving medical assistance since Israel disrupts medical supplies coming into Gaza.

Everyone in Egypt, which borders Gaza and maintains the Israeli blockade at the border—from people in the streets to taxi drivers and all those following newspapers and TV—is exposed to the fact that

the people of Gaza are in intense need of medical care.

It has been reported and verified by medical staff that at least 75 tons of depleted uranium were dropped on this tiny strip of land containing 1.5 million people. The effects of radiation poisoning due to the use of that U.S.-made weapon are now becoming ever more apparent in the population in Gaza.

But Israel's crimes didn't stop last January. Just three days before our delegation landed in Cairo, 17-year-old Hyam Ayash was killed in Mughraqa in Gaza on July 2 by a shell fired from an Israeli tank.

Clearly all aid, no matter how small, is sorely needed in Gaza, whether it comes from the Spirit of Humanity or Viva Palestina. What is most needed, however, is to expose the genocidal nature of the Israeli blockade and exert international pressure demanding it cease immediately. This is the goal of many of these missions to Gaza.

The writer is a member of the Viva Palestina USA delegation.

JUSTICE FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS!

►Mumia
Abu-Jamal

►SF 8 victory

►Troy Davis 3,4



DEFEND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Answering Supreme Court ruling

4

JOBS, JOBS, JOBS!

EDITORIAL 10



Close to 20,000 people filled the Staples Center July 7 in Los Angeles to pay a final tribute to the legendary Michael Jackson who died on June 25. On July 6, thousands of fans of all ages and nationalities waited hours in line to sign a giant memorial card outside the Center. On page 7, read a WW commentary on Jackson.

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Thousands Pay Tribute
to MICHAEL JACKSON



PHOTOS: JULIA LA RIVA

‘FOOD, INC.’: Another capitalist crisis

By Betsey Piette

Filmmaker Robert Kenner’s documentary “Food, Inc.” is a powerful condemnation of the food industry under capitalism—a must-see film that explores the mechanization of U.S. agriculture, which, with the consent of government regulatory agencies, threatens consumers and workers alike.

“Food, Inc.” picks up from films like “The Future of Food,” “Fast Food Nation” and “King Corn” by connecting the dots that calorie-laden McDonald’s-type fast food, heavy reliance on the use of corn and corn byproducts, and Monsanto’s genetically engineered soy beans and other patented seeds are part of a larger picture of an agricultural industry controlled by fewer and fewer corporations.

Food writers Michael Pollan (“In Defense of Food”) and Eric Schlosser (“Fast Food Nation”) narrate the film that reveals an industry driven, not by concerns for human consumption, but strictly by the drive to maximize profits.

“Food, Inc.” starts by examining McDonald’s introduction of high technology in the 1960s, which revolutionized the fast food industry by using assembly-line style preparation. Each worker performs only one repetitive job, whether it’s flipping hundreds of burgers each hour or placing pickles in the same precise spot on every sesame seed bun.

This allowed such a speed-up in production that millions of items could be sold at relatively low cost. Workers were less likely to organize because they could easily be replaced, and consumers came to rely on quick, cheap, albeit highly caloric meals.

Assembly line horrors for animals, workers

This same high-tech assembly-line strategy was gradually adopted by meat and poultry companies, where everything from handling of baby chickens to the final packaging of hamburger was driven by machines. Workers each have one task to perform before the product (food) they are working on passes to the next person on the line.

Kenner explores the increasing monopolization of beef, poultry and pig production, with only a handful of companies, including Tyson, JBS Swift, Armour, Perdue, Cargill Meat Solutions and Smithfield, controlling these industries. In the 1970s the top five beef packers controlled about 25 percent of the market. Today, the top four control more than 80 percent. These giant agribusiness companies declined to be interviewed for the film.

“Food, Inc.” explores the poultry industry’s practices of tube feeding growth hormones and antibiotics to thousands of chickens crowded into dark, confined, poorly ventilated “barns.” Designed to produce plumper chickens in less time, this technique to maximize profits results in animals too heavy to stand.

The average chicken farmer invests over \$500,000 to buy these industrial “barns,” while the annual return

may be as little as \$18,000. Those who don’t go along, like Maryland chicken farmer Carole Morison, who agreed to be interviewed for the film despite threats from Perdue, face the loss of their investments. Another farmer declined to open up his barn where all the latest “factory methods” were being used because Tyson instructed him not to.

In the early 20th century, Upton Sinclair’s classic indictment of the exploitation of workers in the beef processing industry opened the way for the growth of powerful unions which helped improve consumer safety and working conditions over the decades.

But in the last 30 years, the increasing monopolization of the industry has undermined these improvements. Today’s reality is far worse than anything Sinclair exposed, and the role of unions in the industry has been seriously undercut.

Cattle are crowded into centrally organized feed areas—massive plots where they are jammed together, standing in their own feces, and fed a diet heavy in corn that their bodies are not biologically designed to digest. These cattle, sometimes too heavy to stand, are driven to massive factories to be slaughtered and processed in an industrial setting.

Often contaminated with E. coli bacteria as a result of the feeding process, the meat from these animals is mixed together with that of thousands of others. Roughly 73,000 people in the U.S. are sickened annually as a result.

Rather than addressing the root causes of the contamination, or switching to grass feed, the owners of these industrial farms introduce more high-tech solutions, such as spraying ammonia onto the meat to kill the bacteria.

Hogs are grown by the millions in confined spaces and not moved until the day they are slaughtered. In the Smithfield Hog Processing plant in Tar Heel, N.C., the largest slaughterhouse in the world, 32,000 hogs are killed each day.

Smithfield’s workers, many of whom are undocumented, not only labor in an unsafe and unhealthy environment, but are frequently targeted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids. One raid is caught on tape in the film.

The raid makes the point that the partnership between U.S. corporations and the U.S. government resulted in the North American Free Trade Agreement, which allowed subsidized corn produced in the U.S. to flood the Mexican market. Many out-of-work Mexican farmers were enticed by companies like Smithfield to come to the U.S., while ICE looked away. Now these same workers are targeted by ICE while Smithfield bosses continue their operations, this time bussing in workers from over a 100-mile radius for their Tar Heel farm-factories.

Profits from Agent Orange to soybeans

Prior to changing its name, Monsanto was a chemical company that produced DDT and one of the companies that produced Agent Orange. In 1996 it introduced Round-Up Ready Soybeans—genetically modified patented seeds. Over the last 13 years its market control has gone from 2 percent to over 90 percent of all soybeans in the U.S. Today 70 percent of processed foods have some genetically modified ingredient.

In a campaign reminiscent of McCarthy-era witch-

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 Vol. 51, No. 28 • July 16, 2009
 Closing date: July 7, 2009
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Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the first week of January by WW Publishers, 55 W. 17 St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011. Phone: (212) 627-2994. Subscriptions: One year: \$25; institutions: \$35. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from University Microfilms International, 300 Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.
 A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription. Subscription information is at www.workers.org/email.php.
 Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y.
 POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., 5th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10011.

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Citing withheld evidence

Mumia Abu-Jamal supporters call for civil rights investigation

By Hans Bennett

On April 6, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to consider an appeal from death-row journalist and former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal, who was convicted of first-degree murder in the shooting death of white Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner at a 1982 trial deemed unfair by Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/001/2000), the EuropeanParliament, the Japanese Diet, Nelson Mandela, and numerous others.

Abu-Jamal had petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to review the U.S. Third Circuit Court ruling of March 27, 2008, which rejected his bid, based on three issues, for a new guilt-phase trial.

One issue was that of racially discriminatory jury selection, based on the 1986 case Batson v. Kentucky, on which the three-judge panel split 2-1, with Judge Thomas Ambro dissenting. Ambro argued that prosecutor Joseph McGill’s use of 10 out of his 15 peremptory strikes to remove otherwise acceptable African-American jurors was itself enough evidence of racial discrimination to grant Abu-Jamal a preliminary hearing that could have led to a new trial.

In denying Abu-Jamal this preliminary hearing, Ambro argued that the Court was creating new rules that were being exclusively applied to Abu-Jamal’s case. The denial “goes against the grain of our prior actions. ... I see no reason why we should not afford Abu-Jamal the courtesy of our precedents,” wrote Ambro.

Supporters of Mumia Abu-Jamal are responding to the April 2009 U.S. Supreme Court ruling by launching a campaign (freemumia.com/civilrights.html) calling for a federal civil rights investigation into Abu-Jamal’s case. The campaign’s supporters include the Riverside

Church’s Prison Ministry [New York City], actress Ruby Dee, Professor Cornel West and U.S. Congressman Charles Rangel, who is Chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means.

In 2004, the NAACP passed a resolution supporting a new trial for Abu-Jamal, and campaign supporters will be gathering to publicize the civil rights campaign at the upcoming NAACP National Convention in New York City, July 11-16, and to pressure the NAACP to honor their earlier resolutions by actively supporting the current campaign seeking an investigation.

Supporters will then be in Washington, D.C., on July 22 to lobby their elected officials, and in mid-September, they’ll return to Washington, D.C., for a major press conference.

Thousands of signatures have been collected for a public letter to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, which reads: “Inasmuch as there is no other court to which Abu-Jamal can appeal for justice, we turn to you for remedy of a 27-year history of gross violations of U.S. constitutional law and international standards of justice.”

The letter cites Holder’s recent investigation into the case of former Senator Ted Stevens, which led to all charges against him being dropped: “You were specifically outraged by the fact that the prosecution withheld information critical to the defense’s argument for acquittal, a violation clearly committed by the prosecution in Abu-Jamal’s case. Mumia Abu-Jamal, though not a U.S. Senator of great wealth and power, is a Black man revered around the world for his courage, clarity, and commitment, and deserves no less than Senator Stevens.”

Several campaigns seeking a civil right investigation into the Abu-Jamal case have been launched since 1995, at which time the Congressional Black Caucus was one of many groups that publicly sup-

ported an investigation. In a 1995 letter written independently of the CBC, Representatives Chaka Fattah, Ron Dellums, Cynthia McKinney, Maxine Waters and John Conyers (now Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee) stated, “There is ample evidence that Mr. Abu-Jamal’s constitutional rights were violated, that he did not receive a fair trial, and that he is, in fact, innocent.”

Assistant Attorney General Andrew Fois rejected the CBC’s request, yet in a September 1995 letter written to Congressman Ron Dellums conceded that even though there is a five-year statute of limitations for a civil rights investigation, the statute does not apply if “there is significant evidence of an ongoing conspiracy.”

One of the 2009 campaign’s organizers is Dr. Suzanne Ross, a spokesperson for the Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition of New York City (www.freemumia.com). Citing Fois’ letter, Ross argues that the “continued denial of justice to Mumia in the federal courts, as documented by dissenting Judge Thomas Ambro,” is evidence of an “ongoing conspiracy” and thus merits an investigation.

[Ross continued:] “Throughout the history of this case, we were always told, ‘Wait until we get to the federal courts. They will surely overturn the racism and gross misconduct of Judge Sabo,’ but we never got even a preliminary hearing on the issue considered most winnable: racial bias in jury selection, the so-called Batson issue.”

Ross also criticizes the Third Circuit’s denial of Abu-Jamal’s claim that Judge Sabo was unfair at the 1995-97 PCRA [Pennsylvania’s Post-Conviction Relief Act] hearings and considers this denial to be further evidence of an “ongoing conspiracy.” Ross argues that the courts’ continued affirmation of Sabo’s rulings during the PCRA hearings, and Sabo’s ultimate ruling that nothing presented at the PCRA hearings was significant enough to merit a new trial, serves to legitimize numerous injustices throughout Abu-Jamal’s case.



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Specifically referring to the issue of withheld evidence, which was central to the case of former Senator Ted Stevens, Ross identifies five key instances in Abu-Jamal’s case where “evidence was withheld that could have led to Mumia’s acquittal.” The DA’s office withheld two items from Abu-Jamal’s defense: the actual location of the driver’s license application found in Officer Faulkner’s pocket and Pedro Polakoff’s crime scene photos.

At the request of prosecutor McGill, Judge Sabo ruled to block three items from the jury: prosecution eyewitness Robert Chobert’s probation status and criminal history; testimony from defense eyewitness Veronica Jones about police attempts to solicit false testimony; and testimony from police officer Gary Waskshul that contradicted other prosecution witnesses.

“The urgent need for a civil rights investigation is heightened because the DA is still trying to execute Mumia,” emphasized Ross, an organizer of the campaign seeking an investigation. This past April, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear Abu-Jamal’s appeal for a new guilt-phase trial, but the Court has yet to rule on whether to hear the appeal made simultaneously by the Philadelphia District Attorney’s office, which seeks to execute Abu-Jamal without granting him a new penalty-phase trial.

For more information on how you can support the campaign for a federal civil rights investigation, and to sign the online letter and petition to Attorney General Holder, please visit freemumia.com/civilrights.html or www.iacenter.org/mumiapetition/.

Excerpted from an article that appeared in the SF Bay View Newspaper on June 16 at www.sfbayview.com. Bennett is a founder of Journalists for Mumia.

Troy Davis decision postponed

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

The U.S. Supreme Court released a much-anticipated announcement on June 29 about the appeal of death-row prisoner Troy Anthony Davis. A short statement said the Court had not reached a decision on whether to hear Davis’ appeal for a hearing on new evidence supporting his innocence. The Court will again take up the issue when it reconvenes in September.

To millions around the world, Davis’ case highlights the lack of justice in the U.S. Long-established racist practices by police, prosecutors and judges, coupled with a lack of access to competent legal assistance, dooms many poor workers and people of color to false convictions and unequal punishment.

Davis was found guilty in 1991 of the shooting two years earlier of Mark Allen MacPhail, an off-duty Savannah, Ga., policeman. Of the state’s nine non-police witnesses at trial, seven have recanted or changed their testimony, many alleging police threats and intimidation prompting their false identification of Davis as the shooter.



Free Troy Davis

No physical evidence was ever presented linking Davis to the crime, nor was the murder weapon ever found. Sworn statements of nine people not heard at the original trial implicate Sylvester “Red” Coles as being the actual shooter. Coles initially went to the police and fingered Davis.

Three times Davis has come within days and hours of being executed in Georgia’s death chamber. Yet every judicial or state authority has ultimately ruled that evidence of innocence is not sufficient to override procedural and technical restrictions imposed by the 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Use of the Death Penalty Act.

Also on June 29, Davis’ supporters delivered over 60,000 petition signatures urging the new Chatham County District Attorney, Larry Chisholm, to reopen the investigation of MacPhail’s killing. Eleven

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Cynthia McKinney demands justice for Mumia Abu-Jamal

The following June 19 letter was sent by former Congressperson Cynthia McKinney to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder to request that the Justice Department conduct a civil rights investigation of the case of death-row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Attorney General Holder:

I am writing to ask for your personal and immediate intervention to put an end to a grave injustice. Anyone who has read the reports, as I have, including briefs and opinions of the courts, knows that Mumia Abu-Jamal was tried and convicted amid sensationalism and hysteria that, at its core, constituted a racial frenzy. Indicting words from the Judge, himself, point to racism and prejudice even inside the courtroom. The “Batson Issue” should be of real concern to everyone interested in justice. Sadly, Mumia was convicted amid the very racial cowardice of which you, yourself, have spoken.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is known

for, among other things, having said that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Ignoring any instance of racism inside the courtroom leads to injustice that threatens us all.

There is no statute of limitations on the U.S. Constitution, and I therefore request that you do all within your power to review the totality of the circumstances as they are now known in 2009 in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal and ensure that his Constitutional rights (in the form of racially tinged prosecutorial and judicial misconduct) were and are not abridged. The imperative for a civil rights investigation is clear, and I specifically request that of your office.

I am prepared to meet with you or anyone you designate for the purpose of engaging in a dialogue on this matter. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Please accept this request within all applicable rules and regulations.

Sincerely,

Cynthia McKinney

New Haven decision

Supreme Court sets back affirmative action

By John Catalinotto

Consider this test question that measures sports knowledge among a group of people 70 years of age and older who claim to be baseball fans:

“Who was the best professional right-handed pitcher between 1930 and 1955?”

Those completely focused on major league baseball might answer, “Bob Feller.”

Those who know something about the “Negro League”—racism kept African Americans out of MLB until 1947—would probably answer, “Satchel Paige.”*

What’s the right answer? The answer is that it’s hard to make a test that has no cultural bias, even when that is the goal.

That’s what the city of New Haven, Conn., discovered in 2003 when it assigned a multiple-choice test as part of the criteria for promoting firefighters to officer positions. Though some of New Haven’s African-American firefighters passed the test, none scored high enough to be promoted. Nineteen white firefighters and one Latino qualified for promotion.

There were obviously African-American firefighters in New Haven who would be capable supervisors. Following the guidelines for affirmative action indicated by the 1964 Civil Rights Act and later decisions on achieving increased equality, the city of New Haven’s authorities decid-

ed—quite reasonably—that the problem was with the test.

This meant that the written/oral test excluded Black supervisors and would thereby reinforce the weight of 400 years of slavery, 138 additional years of oppression and discrimination, and the current load of institutionalized racism. A test that excludes in this way is illegal. It creates additional problems for a city whose population is 60 percent Black and/or Latina/o. The city decided to postpone the promotions until they found a more nearly unbiased test.

Unfortunately for working-class solidarity, the 19 white firefighters and one Latino sued for the promotions. A lower court—in which Barack Obama’s Supreme Court nominee Sonia Sotomayor took part—approved the city’s decision. But in late June the U.S. Supreme Court by a 5-4 vote reversed the lower court and decided the promotions should go through. The usual arch-reactionary justices made up the majority.

A complete overhaul of the educational, court, prison, economic and social structure is needed to eradicate all forms of racist inequality. Affirmative action, while only a small remedy to confront the vast weight of institutional racism that still exists throughout U.S. society, is still better than nothing. The court’s decision should

be reversed as soon as possible—reversed in the streets and in the next decision by the court.

It is likely that the 20 firefighters who took part in the suit, plus the Black firefighters, are all qualified for promotion. A multiple-choice test is a questionable measure of the ability to make emergency split-second decisions of how to deploy forces while a building is burning or how well the “troops” will respond to a command.

The 20 who sued celebrated the court decision and their promotions. One can easily see that they wanted, and believed they were entitled to, an increase in pay, respect and whatever other benefits go with a promotion. But it is a short-sighted celebration. By damaging affirmative action, the decision makes it harder to build the kind of solidarity with the African-American firefighters and with the community in general that is needed to advance the struggle of all firefighters and the community they serve.

If, faced with a tight budget, New Haven tries to cut Fire Department funding and firefighters’ salaries and benefits, real solidarity among Black, white and Latina/os will be needed to defend workers’ interests.

Beyond New Haven, it is right and just for every worker to defend affirmative action, whatever its limitations. That means it is also in white workers’ interests to

defend affirmative action. Only that way can the working class, made up of all nationalities, build the solidarity needed for a successful, united struggle that will provide jobs for all at a decent wage and respect for all working people in general.

The best struggles will aim for advances for all workers while eliminating inequalities among them.

This court decision has an additional wrinkle because of Sotomayor’s role. The racist right-wing gang who attack her for everything progressive she has done and for her Puerto Rican background also calls her “biased” in this case. What nonsense! What Sotomayor did in this case was make a defensible legal decision that left affirmative action standing. (See editorial on Sotomayor’s nomination at workers.org, posted June 3.)

**Feller was an outstanding MLB pitcher who also led all-star teams in exhibition games against Paige’s African-American all-stars. Paige was a living legend—who would have preferred an MLB salary. A very popular MLB star hitter of that epoch, Joe Dimaggio, faced Paige once in a 1936 exhibition game and was overjoyed to get one single in four at-bats against him. “After I got that hit off Satchel,” said Dimaggio, “I knew I was ready for the big leagues.” (Baseball Almanac)*
E-mail: jcat@workers.org

Wasteful, stupid and cruel

State gov’ts attack poison control centers

By G. Dunkel

Poison control centers are now an issue. The state of California intends to abolish its PCCs. Washington State has cut PCC funding by 35 percent. Michigan has closed two regional centers in the western part of the state. Tennessee, Oregon, Texas and Utah are considering significant budget cuts for PCCs. (AP, June 25)

PCCs are an inexpensive, effective and publicly funded feature of the U.S. health care system. The centers’ main function is to supply emergency advice about what to do for someone who has taken poison.

Poison control centers were developed as an effective way to help save lives and

avoid unnecessary medical care. Hundreds of thousands of people use them every year in California.

About half of the nation’s yearly 2.5 million calls to such centers involve children under 5 years old, who often experience the material world by putting things in their mouths. Twenty percent of the calls to the centers come from medical personnel asking what to do for patients.

California’s PCCs cost \$5.9 million a year, and the state has to fill a \$23 billion budget gap. Not that \$5.9 million would do much to fill the gap, but the state authorities take the position that every little bit helps.

If California’s cuts go through without much resistance, the states mentioned

above and many others—all under tremendous budget pressure—will probably move to cut their PCCs.

According to a June 24 National Public Radio report, replacing PCCs with emergency room visits would cost \$70 or \$80 million a year. As one PCC worker put it, the kids would be getting “a \$2,000 ER glass of milk” rather than a much cheaper one from their home refrigerator. The PCCs in California recommend a trip to the ER in only about 20 percent of cases.

But it’s not just the extra cost that makes the cuts stupid and cruel. When poor parents or parents without health insurance consider the cost of an ambulance and/or an ER visit, they may wait in many cases. Some waits could well be

life threatening. Parents may also be reluctant to go back to the ER for follow-up, while PCCs make follow-up phone calls the same day and a day later.

What California wants to do is take a small, socialized cost—amounting to about 23 cents per year for each adult in California—and push it onto individuals, who will end up paying a much higher price.

It’s not just outrageous stupidity that has led the budget authorities to move to abolish PCCs. It’s not just a ruling-class desire to use the financial crisis to remove every social gain that the working class has won—from poison control to public housing, social security and public education. It’s all of that, plus a cold and cruel calculation that forcing a privatized response to poisoning will take place without major public outcry. □

Charges dropped against SF8

Following is a July 6 statement from freethesf8.blogspot.com, along with more background information on the campaign to win justice for these former Panthers.

Finally, after years of unified resistance by the brothers and the building of massive support, California State prosecutors were forced to admit that they have insufficient evidence against the San Francisco 8.

Charges against four of the defendants were dropped, and Jalil Muntaqim pled no contest to conspiracy to commit voluntary manslaughter. The State prosecutor asked the court to sentence him to 12 months, calling it “a drop in the bucket.” Judge Moscone replied, “Unless you’re the one doing the time.” Jalil received credit for time served (close to 2 1/2 years in County Jail) and 3 years’ probation. He will return to New York to fight for parole.

The charges were dismissed today against Ray Boudreaux, Richard Brown,



SF8 members and supporters.

Hank Jones and Harold Taylor.

The courtroom at 850 Bryant Street was packed with SF 8 supporters after a rally of hundreds, and a huge Free SF 8 banner was displayed on the hillside of Bernal Heights to be seen from all over the city.

“This is finally the disposition of a case that should never have been brought in

the first place,” announced attorney Sofiyah Elijah.

Francisco Torres still faces a court hearing on Aug. 10. Francisco steadfastly maintains his innocence, according to his attorney Charles Bourdon, who intends to file a motion to dismiss the charges against his client. Herman Bell entered a plea a week ago. □

Troy Davis

Continued from page 3

thousand of the signatures come from Chatham County residents.

Chisholm, the first African-American DA, won election in 2008 on a platform that pledged to “increase a sense of fairness” in the office held for some 28 years by Spencer Lawton Jr. At least three other death penalty convictions pursued by Lawton have been overturned by higher courts because of prosecutorial misconduct and error.

Amnesty International, the NAACP, Georgians for an Alternative to the Death Penalty, and Davis’ family members encourage the public to call DA Chisholm’s office at 912-652-7308 and urge a new examination of Davis’ case. Go to www.gfadp.org for updates and to sign the on-line petition. □

Stella D'oro workers win NLRB victory

Company ordered to reinstate them, rescind cuts

Editor's note: As we go to press, Brynwood Partners, private owners of Stella D'oro cookies, reported plans to shut down the company within 90 days. The Stella D'oro Support Committee responded: "Unite to stop this predatory attempt to destroy our communities. The 'Battle of the Bronx' continues. Keep Stella D'oro in the Bronx!" WW will be covering more on this development in future issues.

By Brenda Ryan

After an 11-month strike, the workers of Stella D'oro Biscuit Company won a major victory on June 30 when a federal judge ordered the company to reinstate them with the same pay and benefits they had before the strike.

Judge Steven Davis, an administrative law judge with the National Labor Relations Board, ruled that the company's owners were guilty of engaging in unfair labor practices for refusing to provide the union representing the Stella D'oro workers with a copy of their 2007 audited financial re-

port and for failing to bargain in good faith. The 136 bakery workers belong to Local 50 of the Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union.

Brynwood Partners, a private equity firm, acquired Stella D'oro from Kraft Foods in 2006. Brynwood had demanded draconian cuts in wages and benefits during contract negotiations with the union last year, including imposition of a three-tier wage and benefit structure under which tier-3 employees would not receive any benefits.

Stella D'oro workers went on strike on Aug. 13, when Brynwood walked out of contract negotiations. The company's negotiators were also demanding that long-time employees accept reduced vacations and the elimination of sick days, holidays and severance pay in addition to cuts in health benefits. The drastic wage cuts would have affected mostly women workers, especially Latinas. The company went ahead and illegally implemented those

terms after "permanently replacing" the strikers.

"The choice laid out was whether the employees wanted 'jobs at lower pay or no jobs at all,'" stated Judge Davis. (www.nlr.gov) He said that when the company claimed that it was unable to pay to continue operations without concessions from the workers, it was obligated to provide the union with the financial information it requested.

On May 1, the workers offered to return to work under the terms of the collective bargaining agreement that had expired on June 29, 2008. In his decision, Judge Davis ordered Stella D'oro to pay workers back pay with interest since May 6, the date of receipt of the union's unconditional offer to return to work, which the company then refused to accept.

"This decision vindicates the struggles and sacrifices of our members at Stella D'oro," said Joyce Alston, president of BCTGM Local 50. "The private equity



WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

predators at Brynwood Partners thought they could refuse to bargain with us, deny us information, break the law, tear up our contract, force a strike and break the union. But our members' solidarity has held with the help of the community and our many supporters around the country and world." (www.bctgm.org)

The struggle is not over yet, however. The company may appeal the decision to the full NLRB and to the federal courts. Stella D'oro workers are holding a rally at the plant gates at 237th Street and Broadway in the Bronx on July 10 from 3 p.m. until 6 p.m. They will demand that the company immediately comply with this order and restore their jobs. □

Native woman fined \$2 million

Recording industry's piracy and profits

By Caleb T. Maupin

Jammie Thomas, a single mother of Native Anishinabe descent, has been found guilty of copyright infringement and sentenced to pay a \$2 million fine. Her crime was downloading 24 songs that can be legally purchased on iTunes for 99 cents each. (Wired.com, June 18)

Thomas was convicted by an all-white jury near Duluth, Minn., after the prosecution played on racist stereotypes in its charges against Thomas. The prosecution also purged the jury of anyone who admitted they had downloaded a song or had friends who had done so.

Of the more than 30,000 people sued or threatened with a suit for alleged illegal downloading of music, only Jammie Thomas' case has gone to trial. Thomas works for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians in their Department of Natural Resources and Environment. The Anishinabe peoples are the third-largest Na-

tive nation in the United States, after the Cherokee and the Navajo. Their members include militant activist Winona LaDuke and political prisoner Leonard Peltier.

The corporate interest group that pressed for Thomas' prosecution is known as the Recording Industry Association of America. RIAA is made up of large music producing and distributing corporations in the U.S.

RIAA, along with its allies in the film industry, have launched a well-publicized campaign against the "piracy" of downloading music and videos without paying a fee. One part of this campaign has been ads in which recording artists, light technicians and other low-paid entertainment employees are featured, claiming that "piracy hurts the little guy."

Yet when it comes to "hurting the little guy," the corporations making up RIAA cannot be compared with those who download an MP3 or torrent a video file.

General Electric, which owns Uni-

versal Records, makes its profits from stealing much more than songs. General Electric is contracted by the Pentagon to produce the bombs and weapons used against oppressed people in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq and Colombia, among other places. GE also made \$26.3 billion in the subprime mortgage business with its WMC Mortgage company. (Reuters, March 9, 2007)

Environmental organizations have documented that Sony, a corporation associated with RIAA, has an open policy of practicing extra-legal surveillance of those who organize against global warming and ecological degradation. (Inter Press Service, Sept. 22, 2000)



Jammie Thomas

When will General Electric pay for the millions across the globe killed by the weapons it produces for the Pentagon? When will mortgage lenders linked to the recording industry pay for throwing working people out of their homes and destroying the so-called "American Dream" of home ownership for so many in the U.S.? When will Sony pay for spying on the environmental movement in hopes of suppressing it and continuing mass pollution and ecological destruction?

Only when the workers and oppressed people rise up by the millions and demand it will justice come to those openly guilty of the true "piracy" called capitalist exploitation. □

March demands transgender rights



PHOTO: DR. MAXWELL ANDERSON

In Atlanta on June 27, some 175 members of the transgender community and their supporters marched on the 40th anniversary of the historic Stonewall Rebellion, the militant birth of the modern trans, lesbian, gay, bi and queer movement in the U.S. The demonstration highlighted demands for access to employment, services and safety for transgender people. Deeply moving testimonies at pre- and post-march rallies by transmen and transwomen exposed the discrimination, bigotry and violence committed against them.

The upbeat atmosphere of the marchers was enhanced by the music of the Atlanta Sedition Orchestra, which led the way, and the banner-laden Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition bio-fuel bus, "Rosa," that held the rear. Initiated by Human Rights Atlanta, the three-day commemoration included a panel discussion by transgender activists and a film screening on June 25 and 26.

—Dianne Mathiowetz

A demand for jobs, justice



Hundreds of African Americans and their allies marched through the streets of Providence, R.I., on June 28 to demand "Life, Unity, Freedom, Equality, Peace, Jobs & Human Needs." The march was organized by Urban Men Against Murder to demand jobs, education, recreation and other basic human needs as a response to the violence impacting the oppressed communities, especially among working-class youth across the U.S. Other participating organizations included Nation of Islam, RI Peoples Assembly, RI Unemployed Council, religious groups and the local chapter of the Bail Out The People Movement.

—Report and photo by Bill Bateman

We’re asking you, our readers, to chip in and make a contribution to Workers World’s National Fund Drive.

Here’s why:

This newspaper has become indispensable to many workers and progressive activists in the U.S. and around the world. They rely on it to counter the lies and distortions of big business, which saturate the print and electronic media.

Every day people turn to Workers World to get a unique analysis of events—from the deepening economic crisis, the struggles against racism and scapegoating of immigrants, and the fight for women’s and LGBT rights here at home, to the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan and the struggles against imperialism in Latin America, Palestine, Asia, the Caribbean and Africa.

Our successful website, workers.org, gets close to a quarter million readers each month. But the newer forms of media, while relatively inexpensive, don’t reach everyone. Workers World needs to get into the hands of workers newly laid off, homeless people who have been evicted or foreclosed, those on the picket lines fighting for jobs and justice. That takes money because they don’t have any. We need to subsidize the print edition so it can be there for them.

A factor in workers’ struggles

Here are a few recent examples of how WW’s analysis and ideas on how to fight back against the corporate billionaires have struck a chord among workers:

- Articles by longtime Chrysler worker Martha Grevatt on the struggle of autoworkers have been picked up around the country, from the Action Center for Justice’s blog to a forum for car dealers, which linked to “Can Workers Stop the Illegal Sale of Chrysler?” USA Today also linked to Grevatt’s interview of UE Local 1110 President Armando Robles, a leader of the successful worker occupation of the Republic Windows & Doors factory in Chicago.
- WW’s articles on the struggle against foreclosures and evictions were especially welcome at the recent People’s Summit and Tent City in Detroit.
- Our support brought warmth to the picket lines during the long strike of Stella D’oro workers in New York.
- Several unions get bundles of Workers World every week to distribute to their members, including locals of the Longshore, Teamsters and Electrical workers.

What about Obama?

Larry Holmes’ articles analyzing the Obama candidacy were disseminated throughout the U.S. Readership spiked during the election as people sought out WW’s perspective. His analysis also helped progressives in other countries understand how to react to this new phenomenon. For example, the prestigious Portuguese magazine Seara Nova translated and published Holmes’ analysis.

Reaching the youth

WW reports regularly on the work of Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST), a growing anti-capitalist youth group. Our articles have also been used as educational tools in classrooms. Monica Moorehead’s “Racism, Class and the NBA” is included in the student textbook “Pop Perspectives.” The Safe Schools Coalition, a group that supports LGBT youth, recommends that teachers include in their lesson plans an article Moorehead and Leslie Feinberg wrote on NBA star Dennis Rodman.

Prominent voices

Workers World has provided an outlet for guest writers like Clarence Thomas, ILWU Local 10 member and Million Worker March leader, who reported on a U.S. workers’ delegation to Cuba’s 2009 May Day celebration. It has opened its pages to political prisoners like Mumia Abu-Jamal, Leonard Peltier and Siddique Abdullah Hasan, one of the Lucasville 5.

Other contributors have included Hans Bennett, a founder of Journalists for Mumia; Amadi Ajamu and Roger Wareham of the December 12th Movement, who have written on the struggle against racism and its impact on the Black community in the U.S. and in Africa;

and Saladin Muhammad of the Black Workers League on the Gulf Coast Reconstruction Program.

From articles to books

Many Workers World articles have served as the basis for books.

Fred Goldstein’s many articles on the economy are expanded upon in his book “Low-Wage Capitalism,” a Marxist analysis of globalized, high-tech imperialism and its effect on the class struggle.

The “Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle” book, edited by Monica Moorehead, includes articles that appeared in Workers World.

Part of the WW series “Lavender and Red” by prominent LGBT author and activist Leslie Feinberg has just been released as a book: “Rainbow Solidarity in Defense of Cuba.”

A new edition of “High Tech, Low Pay,” the seminal work of Workers World Party founder Sam Marcy, which evolved from pieces he wrote for the paper, will be released soon with a new introduction by Goldstein.

All of these publications are available at Leftbooks.com, a progressive online bookstore.

Reaching the world in many languages

WW contains at least one page of articles translated into Spanish, which appears every week as Mundo Obrero.

Our articles are regularly translated into Arabic, French, Portuguese, Spanish and Russian and read by communists and class-conscious workers everywhere. Dozens of publications, websites and blogs reproduce or link to Workers World stories.

Avante, the publication of the Portuguese Communist Party, and the New Worker in Britain regularly reprint articles. The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation has posted pieces in its monthly publication. The Ukrainian newspaper Workers Action translates articles into Russian.

WW articles on the Middle East are frequently translated into Arabic for publication in the Syrian newspapers al-Ba’ath and Tishreen.

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Articles on the capitalist meltdown and Israel’s war threats on Iran have been translated into French and published on the website of Belgian author Michel Collon.

A link to WW’s analysis of the Iranian election appeared on newsnow.co.uk, a news portal in Britain, and was one of the most e-mailed articles in the newspaper.

International coverage

Writers for the paper are involved in many different struggles and share their extraordinary expertise. Abayomi Azikiwe, the editor of Pan-African News Wire, writes regularly on Africa for WW. His articles analyzing the U.S. and British attacks against Zimbabwe’s government have been widely reproduced.

John Catalinotto’s interview with an Indigenous leader of Papua New Guinea on a battle there against a gold mining company was reprinted in newspapers in Papua New Guinea and in Australia.

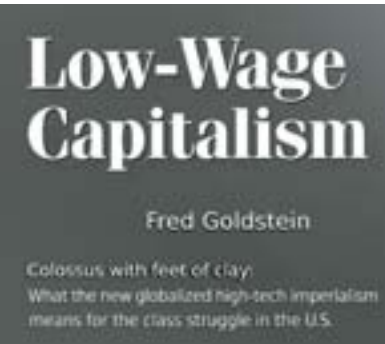
Our reporters have been to north and south Korea, Cuba, Venezuela, El Salvador, Palestine, Lebanon and many other countries to report on the struggles against U.S. imperialism and for national self-determination.

‘A fantastic paper’

People who regularly distribute WW have seen an upsurge of interest among workers. Art Rosen passes it out to subway conductors in New York City every day. “When I ask what they think of the paper, they say, ‘It’s fantastic.’ When they see me walking down the platform, they reach out for the paper. Maybe 90 percent plus take the paper with a smile on their face.”

The millions now facing the social breakdown of a capitalist economic crisis need a Marxist analysis and a fightback program. And Workers World needs your help, now more than ever, to keep the paper growing and reaching more workers.

Please give generously!



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The life and death of Michael Jackson

By Larry Hales



*It happened you would even play, be merry
And dance, in sheer exuberance of spirit:
And then would all the splendour of your manhood,
The sweet desires of youth sound, wild with power,
On strings of brass, in burning tambourines.
And from that mighty music the beginning
Of jazz arose, tempestuous, capricious,
Declaring to the whites in accents loud
That not entirely was the planet theirs.*

(Excerpt from “May Our People Triumph,” Patrice Lumumba)

The excerpt above, taken from a poem by Patrice Lumumba, depicts specifically the spirit of African people chained and enslaved. From the conditions imposed upon them came a rich musical culture.

The conditions were not of a natural kind, but came from the degenerate racist ideology that justified the primitive accumulation of capital by European nations and the U.S., which included genocide, rape, land theft and enslavement of the original inhabitants of the Americas, Africa and Asia.

Black culture was and is defined by the conditions imposed upon Black people in context of a larger culture that springs from the productive mode of the larger society; that is to say, Black culture is not only contrasted with nature, but with unnatural conditions in line with the specific history of the United States.

When looking at Black culture years from now, though there may be many artists who were political and whose music spoke to and of the actual struggle for Black liberation, Michael Jackson—who passed on June 25 at the age of 50 from alleged cardiac arrest—will shine forever brightly.

Before his death, Michael was in the midst of rehearsing for a scheduled 50-concert tour that was to begin on July 13. All the concerts were to take place in London.

He was not only a brilliant musician and performer, but was a perfect example of how the human spirit can both thrive and suffer under the death-grip of capitalist society, no matter how wealthy cultural icons may become.

Upon hearing about his death, millions of his fans around the world held impromptu vigils, built shrines and gathered in public places to sing his songs and perform his dance moves for hours. More than a thousand prisoners in the Philippines re-enacted Jackson’s groundbreaking video, “Thriller,” as homage to him. As of July 5, over one million people have registered online

to attend a July 7 public memorial for Michael at the Staples Center in Los Angeles—a venue that holds a little more than 20,000.

Thousands lined the streets of Harlem for a memorial at the Apollo Theater June 26, where Michael and his four brothers won amateur night on Aug. 13, 1967. They caught the eye of artists like Diana Ross and were eventually signed to Motown Records as the Jackson Five.

At that time, Michael was 9 years old and the second youngest son of Joseph Jackson, a steel mill crane operator, and Katherine Jackson. He was raised along with his eight siblings in Gary, Ind. He was then the little kid with the big voice, dance moves and incredible charisma.

Role of bigotry, exploitation

The Jackson Five came into being at the height of the Civil Rights struggle, as Black musical culture was becoming increasingly popular in the mainstream. The realities of racism would play a major part in the development of Michael once he left the Jackson Five. What are seldom discussed are the effects of misogyny, homophobia and the patriarchal system on his development as an adult in the public eye.

Michael was a worldwide icon of popular music, and though for the most part he was not political, his life cannot be taken out of political context.

Michael has been ridiculed for being androgynous, for his effeminate speaking voice, his soft features and his alteration of them through cosmetic surgery, and even for his changed complexion over the years, which is attributed to his desire to even out his complexion after the encroaching effects of vitiligo, a skin disorder.

A person should be free to express who they are, no matter whether they exist in the public eye or outside of it. Michael, like so many, was denied that and the more his appearance changed, the more he was ridiculed and

degraded in the mainstream media for it.

It is no wonder that he became more withdrawn and untrusting. Michael’s whole life was one of suffering child abuse, abuse by record labels and managers, and the general abuse of the music industry—which, like any industry under capitalism, views the end product, music, as a commodity for which to gain profit. Though many are extremely well-paid and adored by millions, musicians and entertainers are workers and ultimately work to make a profit for someone else, who most times owns the rights to the finished product.

Different than most people, though, Michael was very popular and made hundreds of millions for the labels he was signed to. MTV, which initially refused to showcase Black artists, owes its survival to Michael, who transformed music videos and stage performances.

His presence shone through and through; his singing could evoke many different emotions. His vocals could go from being light and delicate as an orchid to pithy and harsh, as evidenced on the song “Will You Be There,” where Michael sings: “Everyone’s taking control of me/seems that the world’s got a role for me/I’m so confused, will you show to me/you’ll be there for me and care enough to bear me?”

It is the system and his drive to overcome bankruptcy and be able to do what he loved to do, perform, which led to his death. After years of performing and learning to cope with the pressure placed upon him, he developed insomnia and turned to a powerful sedative, Diprivan—delivered through an IV and extremely dangerous—to be able to sleep. Jackson reportedly continued to take painkillers following an accidental fire that burned his scalp during a Pepsi-Cola commercial in the early 1980s. There is much speculation that the combination of powerful sedatives and painkillers eventually stopped Jackson’s heart and breathing.

His talent was immense. He will be remembered as a giant and despite the years of ridicule, the allegations of child abuse and molestation—something no one should make light of and for which a jury of mostly white non-peers acquitted him of—the legions of fans across borders and cultural lines never wavered in adoration for him.

There may have existed within him many contradictions, as exist in all under this brutal system. The years of suffering from racism may have taken its toll on him; he may have fallen victim to the dominant society’s definition of beauty and wanted to exist in between being Black and white. Frantz Fanon’s writings on the Black psyche seem to illustrate perfectly the paradox of Michael.

Louis Armstrong famously lamented suffering racism with the lyrics, “I’m white inside, but that don’t help my case/That’s life; can’t hide what is in my face,” in the song “Black and Blue.”

But, despite the detractors, Michael Jackson cannot be separated from the Black experience. His music and dancing, which incorporated many Black musical and dance styles, was uniquely Black.

He never lost his Black fans in the U.S. and millions of his fans around the world. From Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe, Caribbean and the Americas he was beloved and the world will mourn him. His music will live on and he will forever be remembered as the King of Popular music. □

‘FOOD, INC.’: Another capitalist crisis

Continued from page 2

hunts against communists, Monsanto has carried out a systematic campaign against farmers who continue to use their own unmodified seeds, sending a team of private investigators into fields looking for evidence that Monsanto’s seeds ended up on these farmers’ land.

Monsanto compiled a list with hundreds of names of farmers who refused to buy their modified seeds and names of “seed cleaners”—agricultural workers with mobile equipment who assist farmers in cleaning seeds for recycling—for prosecution. Those who tried to stand up to Monsanto’s legal challenges faced enormous legal bills that eventually forced them to go along or go out of business.

Today, 30 percent of the land in the U.S. is used to produce corn, the crop most heavily subsidized by the U.S. government. Corn products can be found in ketchup, batteries, peanut butter, Coke, jelly, Sweet & Low, Motrin, charcoal and diapers, to name just a few items.

The broad use of corn products, particularly high-fructose corn syrup, has also been credited with spearheading the growing problems of obesity and related diseases. “Food, Inc.” sounds the alarm over the nearly epidemic spread of early-onset (type 2) diabetes in the U.S., which disproportionately affects people who have a hard time paying for healthier, less-processed food. The statistics are shocking: Type-2 diabetes is expected to affect one out of three people born after 2000 and one in two who are people of color.

“Food, Inc.” serves up ample evidence that the fault lies with the greed of the capitalist corporations, but falls short of offering any real alternative. Like the fast

food companies it condemns, “Food, Inc.” sugarcoats the problem by suggesting these corporations will self-reform under consumer pressure. Kenner leaves his audience hungry for more by failing to conclude that the system “Food, Inc.” exposes needs to end. In fact, he does the opposite.

After presenting damning evidence that capitalism’s drive for super profits has led to a crisis in food production, all but obliterating the “family farm” while threatening the health of consumers and the safety of workers, Kenner lets Gary Hirshberg, former owner of Stonyfield Farms who sold his company’s organic brand name to Colgate, suggest that a kinder, gentler capitalism is possible, even though all the anecdotal evidence speaks to the contrary.

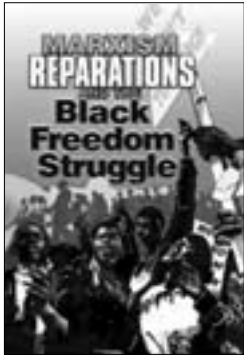
Hirshberg concludes, “We can’t get rid of capitalism.” Rather, he states, consumer demands for healthier food will move the mega-giants like Wal-mart to carry more organic produce. However, “Food, Inc.” shows Wal-Mart representatives going to a small organic dairy farm that sells milk to Stonyfield Farms, raising the reality that even these independent farmers will eventually be dependent on the giant food corporations for distribution.

Kenner suggests alternative farms, farmers’ markets and buying local, organic products—all appealing and available for those with means. But they will not reverse the trend toward monopolization. Nor can they address the global problem where an estimated 913 million people in 2008 suffered from chronic hunger. It will take a socialist economy, based on production for human need not profit, to do that. □

MARXISM, REPARATIONS and the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper. Edited by Monica Moorehead. Includes:

- Racism, national oppression and self-determination
- Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery
- Black youth: repression & resistance
- Black & Brown unity: A pillar of struggle for human rights & global justice!
- Are conditions ripe again today? 40th anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion
- Racism and poverty in the Delta
- The struggle for Socialism is key
- Domestic Workers United demand passage of a bill of rights
- Black Reconstruction: The unfinished revolution



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Palestine solidarity grows as Cynthia McKinney, other activists released from Israeli jails

By LeiLani Dowell
New York

July 6—Former U.S. Congressperson Cynthia McKinney has been released and deported from Israel, after being imprisoned there since June 30 along with other members of the Free Gaza Movement.

McKinney and 20 others were traveling aboard the boat Spirit of Humanity to bring desperately needed humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza when the Israeli navy took the ship into custody and arrested all aboard. The international delegation included participants from Britain, Denmark, Ireland, Jordan, Palestine, Scotland, the U.S. and Yemen. Materials aboard the ship, which had passed a security clearance when it left port in Cyprus, included concrete to rebuild homes, medicines, children’s toys and olive trees.

Cynthia McKinney’s mother, Leola McKinney, told the July 5 Atlanta Journal-Constitution that she had received word that McKinney had been released from Israeli custody and taken to Ben Gurion International Airport. In addition, the Free Gaza Movement reports that the six British participants were expected to be deported home July 6. Two members of the delegation, who hold Israeli passports, were previously released; it is unclear what is happening with the remaining prisoners.

Israeli officials claim that delegation members could have been released sooner, but they refused to sign a document, written in Hebrew, admitting that they violated Israel’s inhumane blockade against the people of Gaza.

McKinney noted in a statement: “This is an outrageous violation of international law. Our boat was not in Israeli waters, and we were on a human rights mission to the Gaza Strip. President Obama just told Israel to let in humanitarian and reconstruction supplies, and that’s exactly what we tried to do.”



Palestinian women rally in front of Israeli Mission at the U.N., July 1. WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

Demonstrations throughout the U.S. condemned the hijacking of the Spirit of Humanity and the detention of its passengers. In Detroit a July 1 protest, organized by the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice and Latinos Unidos, condemned both the Israeli government actions as well as the recent military coup in Honduras. Signs carried by activists called for the end of the blockade of Gaza, the release of McKinney, the restoration of civilian rule in Honduras and the suspension of U.S. aid to the military regime in Honduras and the Israeli government in Palestine.

In New York, more than 100 people rallied on July 1 across the street from the Israeli Mission to the United Nations until City Councilperson Charles Barron, defying police barricades, led the crowd across the street to protest right in front of the mission. Other protests were held in Los

Angeles, Philadelphia and Buffalo, N.Y.

Activists converged July 3 on the House of the Lord Church in Brooklyn, N.Y., for a send-off of another mission to deliver aid to the people of Palestine. Hundreds of people arrived in New York to participate in the Viva Palestina U.S. caravan, which left July 4 for Cairo to bring supplies across the border into Palestine (see accompanying article).

Lamis Deek of Al-Awda put the caravan into the context of the Palestinian struggle for the past 50 years: “I recall growing up where Palestine was a shameful word and, especially for the past nine years, activity around Palestine, funding to Palestine, humanitarian support to Palestine

has been criminalized. What we are doing is we’re normalizing support to Palestine. ... Equally important, we’re normalizing our right to speak, to change the policies of this government.”

Noting the thousands of Palestinian men, women and children who are daily abused in Israeli prisons, Deek stated, “This is humanitarian, but this is not about charity; this is about self-determination and about people’s right to determine their own lives, their own future.”

Several speakers tied the struggles of people of color in the U.S. to the struggle for self-determination in Palestine. Kevin Ovendon, a coordinator of Viva Palestina from Britain, told the audience, “If you look at the spillover from what’s happening in Palestine and the wider Middle East and what’s been done to Blacks and Muslim people in particular inside the United States, we are still living to some extent within the context of Selma, Birmingham, Montgomery ... and of Martin and of Malcolm.”

City Councilperson Barron, who is participating in the caravan with several members of his staff, said: “As Black people, we have to fight against suffering anywhere. One baby suffering in Palestine or anywhere else is one of our babies, and we have to end that suffering.” Barron discussed the hypocritical policies of the Obama administration, which killed three Somalis who were defending Somali waters against the dumping of toxic materials and the trawling of their waters, and yet remains silent about the Israeli capture of the Spirit of Humanity.

For updates on the Spirit of Humanity and Viva Palestina caravans, visit <http://freegaza.org> and www.vivapalestina-us.org.



Above, Mumia supporter Pam Africa, speaks at July 1 Philadelphia protest. Above upper right, Buffalo protest, July 1.



To raise awareness Rally defends Muslims under attack

A July 3 rally in Washington, D.C., against FBI entrapment of Muslims and Arabs brought together family members and supporters of victims of so-called terrorism cases, including Ahmed Omar Abu of Muslims-Ali, Ehsanul Sadaquee (Shifa), Saifullah Paracha and his son Uzair, Syed Hashmi (Fahad), Sami Al-Arian, the Newburgh Four and the Fort

Dix Five. An evening forum following the rally provided an opportunity for the victims of these and other cases from around the country to exchange information and come up with ideas on how to better work together for their freedom. For more information, email peacethrujustice@aol.com.

—Report and photo by Joe Piette

Hondurans vow to fight on against coup regime

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

July 7—Honduran popular leader Juan Barahona told Workers World today that the resistance to the illegal June 28 coup that deposed President Manuel Zelaya grows daily despite the fierce repression and constant attacks by the coup regime and the corporate media. The coup regime is increasingly isolated. A leader of the Popular National Front of Resistance to the Coup D'État (FNPRG), Barahona said, "They can only stay alive with the oxygen from the U.S."

The FNPRG is the leading coalition of three workers' federations, the six teachers' federations, youth and students, indigenous, political parties and other sectors of society organizing the resistance. Barahona said they continue strong and with high spirits.

His voice was full of excitement after nine days of constant demonstrations. One gathering of hundreds of thousands of people at Toncontín Airport in Tegucigalpa attempted to welcome their constitutionally elected president as he flew back from Washington but was unable to land. Barahona said the people are determined to struggle and thanked the international community for its support.

The general strike continues, and all public schools are closed. Only the private sector is operating "normally."

The movement in Honduras asks for more pressure on the U.S. government and requests that condemnations also be sent to the illegitimate coup government in Honduras.

At the airport

Though this Central American country is about the same size and population—8 million—as Virginia, hundreds of thousands of Hondurans from all over the country converged on July 5 outside Toncontín Airport to welcome Zelaya back. The Honduran military's coup a week earlier had forced the constitutionally elected president out of his residence and flew him to Costa Rica.

Zelaya was returning July 5 from Washington, D.C., where he attended an emergency meeting of the Organization of American States, which voted unanimously to eliminate coup-led Honduras from membership.

Live reports of TeleSUR in Honduras showed the airport crowd's excitement. The people shouted, "Watch out, the people's struggle is spreading throughout Latin America," "People, join in," "The people united will never be defeated" and "We want Mel," referring to Zelaya's middle name. The unarmed crowd faced a huge deployment of heavily armed police and military, including snipers, which prevented the demonstrators from approaching the airport.

As the Venezuelan jet flown by two Venezuelan Air Force pilots and carrying Zelaya and U.N. General Assembly President Miguel D'Escoto approached, the enthusiastic crowd had grown so large the police finally stepped back, allowing the people closer. This turned out to be another criminal action by the illegal authorities.

People called on soldiers not to fire but to join them, but the military attacked the demonstrators with tear gas and live ammunition. A shot to the head killed one 19-year-old, and gunfire wounded dozens of others. Troops parked two vehicles in the middle of the runway as they threatened the pilot that the Honduran Air Force would intercept the plane.

After several futile attempts to land, the pilot left, taking Zelaya to Managua,



Rosendo Delgado of Latinos Unidos at July 1 Detroit protest.

WWW PHOTO: ABAYOMI AZIKIWE

Nicaragua where he met the presidents of Nicaragua, Argentina, Ecuador and Paraguay and held a press conference. By July 7 he flew to Washington for talks with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Lies and arrogance of the coup regime

Nearly all governments and international bodies have repudiated the coup regime. The Latin American governments and organizations like the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, the Central American Integration System and the Rio Group have recalled their ambassadors and have cut trade and cooperation with Honduras.

Despite its isolation, the illegal government of Roberto Micheletti, with the complicity of the oligarchy-owned media, continues to lash out against Zelaya, cynically defending the coup as a necessary action to bring "peace and constitutionality" to the country.

Honduras' general prosecutor issued an arrest warrant for Zelaya. Rodolfo Padilla Sunseri, the mayor of San Pedro Sula, Honduras' second largest city where militant demonstrations have been taking place, was arbitrarily removed and replaced by William Hall, Micheletti's nephew.

The country has been militarized. The army has placed roadblocks in the main highways, particularly the ones leading to Tegucigalpa, in an attempt to stop demonstrators from reaching the capital. The army has stopped buses and shot at the tires; yet people have continued on foot to join the resistance.

Miguel Insulza, the president of the OAS, went July 3 to Honduras in a desperate attempt to try to solve the situa-

tion through diplomacy. However, after 15 representatives of the Supreme Court told him Zelaya's ousting is "irreversible," Insulza concluded that the OAS should eliminate Honduras as a member and that there were no conditions for a peaceful return of Zelaya. He also met with the popular movement opposing the coup.

That same day, 1992 Guatemalan Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú arrived in Honduras with a delegation of human rights advocates to monitor the conditions. The coup regime had declared a curfew and state of siege forbidding individual rights and the right of association, resulting in an explosion of human rights abuses. To date, 800 people are still detained.

Demands on Obama and the USA

The Latin American community is now focusing on the U.S., which has neither removed its ambassador nor suspended aid and trade, vital to Honduras. U.S. policy is seen as favoring the coup despite President Barack Obama and Secretary Clinton's tepid condemnations, expressed only after Latin American governments took strong actions in defense of the deposed Honduran president.

Many voices demand stronger U.S. condemnations and actions. In a letter circulated on the Internet, 1980 Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Pérez Esquivel of Argentina wrote: "There are no isolated events; this reflects the politics aimed at protecting the hegemonic political and economic interests throughout the continent."

Esquivel criticizes governments that "have expressed themselves very timidly in the face of the coup, who appear to support the military coup." He says that Latin



Opponents of the military coup march to airport in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, where President Zelaya's plane tried to land on July 6.

Americans pressured Obama to condemn the coup—mildly—and then Obama "turns aside, knowing that the Pentagon and the CIA are promoters and supporters of the Honduran military coup." (Granma, July 6)

Pentagon and Honduras

For decades Honduras has been a U.S. military outpost in the region, whose ruling oligarchy is tightly linked with the imperialist North. From Honduras the U.S.-backed Contras attacked the Sandinista Revolution in neighboring Nicaragua during the 1980s. Joint training and exercises demonstrate the Pentagon's close association with the Honduran army.

The Pentagon's Soto Cano Military Base in Honduras is now under the command of Col. Richard A. Juergens, who was the Director of the Special Operations Command during the February 2004 kidnapping of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The leadership of Honduras' military were all trained at the infamous "School of Assassins," the U.S.-run School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Ga.

In addition, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Thomas A. Shannon Jr. and U.S. Ambassador to Honduras Hugo Llorens were fully aware of the conflicts leading to the military coup. They met with government officials including Zelaya and Micheletti before the coup. (New York Times, June 29) They could easily have threatened to cut aid should a coup be carried out, but they did not.

Who benefits from this coup? Washington is unhappy with progressive developments in Latin America. The U.S. rulers hate Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, the

Continued on page 10

Unionist from Haiti reports on minimum-wage struggle

Louis Fignole Saint-Cyr of the Autonomous Confederation of Haitian Workers (CATH) spoke at a meeting at the Brecht Forum in New York City on July 5. He announced the formation of the Directorate of Liaison between Community Groups and Unions to struggle to raise the minimum wage from the current \$1.65 a day to \$4.85 a day and to improve the social conditions of Haitian workers and community members. Saint-Cyr also called for unity between the struggle of the Haitian people and progressives in the United States.

Ray LaForest, a Haitian-American trade unionist, spoke about the struggle history of the Haitian people. Suzanne Ross of the Free Mumia Coalition introduced one of Mumia Abu-Jamal's commentaries on Haiti.

—Report and photo by G. Dunkel



Ray LaForest and Louis Fignole Saint-Cyr.

WWW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL



Jobs, jobs, jobs!

Here’s how the corporate media present the enormous problem of unemployment now seizing this country: It’s bad. It’s so sad. But there’s nothing you can do about it; that’s how capitalism works. Maybe things will get better.

Officially, unemployment is now 9.6 percent and rising. At least one analyst says it’s probably more than 10 percent because the figures don’t count the millions incarcerated or those on Social Security Disability programs. Both have “reduced the proportion of adults seeking jobs, at least compared to recessions of the past. Millions of Americans who would otherwise be counted as unemployed don’t get counted at all.” (Greg Burns, Chicago Tribune, July 7)

We all know that the official figure doubles when you include those who have given up looking because there is nothing out there (“discouraged” workers) and those who work as little as one hour a week but want to work full-time.

This means that more than 20 million workers find themselves stranded without the paychecks needed to pay for daily expenses in addition to debts: medical bills, credit card debt, mortgages and car payments. The result is chaos in their lives.

The media are right about one thing. This IS capitalism. This IS how it works. It’s a hellish system, especially in a period of economic crisis—which is a recurrent feature of capitalism.

But that doesn’t mean the working class has to sit back and take it.

A real movement for jobs can demand that the government put money directly into job creation instead of giving away trillions to the banks and insurance companies with the vague promise that somehow that will stimulate the economy—which it hasn’t, not in the least.

A real movement for jobs can begin to contest the legal right of the bosses to just throw out workers when profits are weak. It’s the workers who built the plants, who created the wealth in the first place. They have years of equity in their jobs. A good chunk of their wages has been deferred to cover pensions and medical plans, which are now threatened. The workers have a right to their jobs and to control their workplaces.

In September, the G20 heads of state will be meeting on the economic crisis in Pittsburgh. It’s a good time and a great place for workers to demand that jobs come first in any plans under discussion. Many groups and coalitions are organizing protests and other events.

The Bail Out the People Movement, which just participated in a successful National People’s Summit and Tent City in Detroit, is putting out a call for a Global Week of Solidarity with the Unemployed to take place in Pittsburgh Sept. 19-26. Its main demand is jobs, and it will erect a tent city in Pittsburgh for the unemployed. A major march is planned for Sept. 20.

Pittsburgh. September 19 through 26. Put those dates on your calendar. Workers need jobs, jobs, jobs! □

Hondurans vow to fight on against coup regime

Continued from page 9

Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas and the possibility of losing an important source of wealth that they stole from Latin America a century ago. The imperialists hate the idea that those in their “own backyard” begin trading among themselves and with China, Russia and Iran.

The big coup backers are from the entrepreneurial and wealthy class in Honduras, the 13 oligarchy families. They say Zelaya was too close to Chávez.

Response from U.S. progressives

U.S. organizations and individuals have joined the international progressive movement to oppose the coup and express solidarity with the Honduran people, among them Danny Glover, the AFL-CIO and International Action Center founder Ramsey Clark.

In his open letter Glover writes, “It is imperative that citizens across the United States write and call upon President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to quickly execute every available influence to ensure that President Zelaya is safely returned to his post.”

The AFL-CIO writes, “We call on the United States Government to also take all measures within its diplomatic powers to ensure that all Honduran civilians, and

particularly trade unionists and social activists denouncing the coup, are safe and secure and will not be victimized by violence and repression.”

In a July 5 letter to President Obama, cosigners Clark and Bishop Filipe Teixeira of the Diocese Saint Francis of Assisi in Boston write, “We conclude that the United States government has responsibility for the coup and is obligated to demand that the Honduran army return to constitutional order and avoid criminal actions against the Honduran people.

“We therefore insist, for the benefit of the peace in the region, that President Barack Obama immediately cut off all aid and relations to the Honduran army and suspend U.S. relations with the government of Honduras until the constitutional president is returned to office.” □



WWW PHOTO: JOHN CALANOTTO

U.S. stays in Kyrgyzstan as Pentagon extends air base lease

By Heather Cottin

By increasing its financial offer to the regime in Kyrgyzstan, the Pentagon has been able to buy the rights to extend its lease on Manas air base. More than 189,000 U.S. and NATO troops and much war materiel have been flown the 600 miles from this base to Kabul and the killing fields of Afghanistan.

Kyrgyzstan, a country about half the size of California with a population of 5.4 million, is located in Central Asia on the northwest border of China. It experienced one of the “color revolutions” that broke socialist republics away from the Soviet Union and whittled down Yugoslavia.

In February Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev had signed a decree ordering U.S. troops to leave Manas. It cost Washington hundreds of millions of dollars to change his mind.

The first “color revolution” took place in 2000 in the former Yugoslavia, after the U.S. and its NATO allies broke up the former socialist federation and rained bombs for 78 days on Serbia in the spring of 1999. In 2000, an uprising led by the OTPOR group in Serbia invalidated the democratic election of Slobodan Milosevic, claiming vote fraud.

During the election, the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy funded Serbian groups that opposed President Slobodan Milosevic while billionaire George Soros’ Open Society Institute helped organize and fund the opposition. Serbia—which still had remnants of socialism—was transformed into a pro-NATO capitalist mini-state, open to Western investment and penetration.

U.S. quasi-governmental institutions like the International Crisis Group and Radio Free Europe, both funded by Soros, as well as the National Endowment for Democracy helped bring about Georgia’s “Rose Revolution” in 2003, Ukraine’s “Orange Revolution” in 2004 and Kyrgyzstan’s “Tulip Revolution” in 2005.

These countries had all split from the Soviet Union in 1991 and had already begun pro-capitalist reforms but were not complete tools of the imperialist West. In each case, the U.S. government, with corporate financing, helped put in place a regime even more open to privatization and foreign investment. This extended the reach of the Pentagon and/or NATO further east toward Russia and China. By this year, NATO had grown from its origin as a U.S.-Western Europe military pact to having 28 members, mostly former socialist countries or Soviet republics.

Poverty accompanies neo-liberalism

In all the former socialist countries, poverty and unemployment grew astronomically as their “color revolution” governments carried out economic “shock therapy” as ordered by the International Monetary Fund. State industries were either shut down or privatized and social services cut, while Western corporations introduced factories that paid abysmally low wages even as they closed higher-wage factories at home.

In Kyrgyzstan the U.S. had backed Bakiyev for president. But once in office, he needed money and bargained for a better deal from the U.S. or Russia, both of which sought political, economic and military ties with this former Soviet republic.



PART I

On a trip to Moscow in February Bakiyev managed to procure a \$2 billion loan, which included money to help Kyrgyzstan build the 1,900-megawatt Karambata 1 hydroelectric project. (Mosnews, June 19) In June, Russia’s state-owned natural gas giant Gazprom agreed to purchase the majority share of the state gas enterprise Kyrgyzgaz. (UPI, June 19)

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is an international mutual-security group originally founded as the Shanghai Five in 1996 by the governments of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan and renamed the SCO in 2001 after the admission of Uzbekistan.

The SCO met in June in Yekaterinburg, Russia, along with leaders of other developing Eurasian nations to discuss the increasingly tense situation in the region. Washington, as the most powerful member of NATO, is heavily militarizing its new NATO client states, from Georgia to Poland, while leaning on its NATO allies to contribute more troops to the war against Afghanistan.

Bakiyev had sworn he was closing the Manas base in Kyrgyzstan, but met with Afghanistan’s president Hamid Karzai in Yekatarinburg and subsequently changed his tune.

The payoff

Turkish President Abdullah Gul was also in Yekatarinburg and told Bakiyev that if the United States was able to continue to use the airbase at Manas, Kyrgyzstan could expect a billion dollars in U.S. investment. (Nezavisimaya Gazeta)

Sweetening the package, the Pentagon agreed to a rise in the rent it pays for the use of the base from \$17 million to \$60 million a year.

In addition, the U.S. government indicated it would pay the Kyrgyz government about \$120 million for development, construction, airport traffic control and its “counter-terrorism” and anti-drug trafficking efforts. (Russia Today, June 23)

Toktogul Kakchekeev, an independent Kyrgyz political scientist and security expert, says that “The Americans have accomplished their main task—they have retained their presence within the Commonwealth of Independent States,” referring to the euphemistically named alliance of former USSR republics. He adds that “the airbase case has been played according to a thoroughly worked-out scenario. [The] unwillingness of the Pentagon to leave Kyrgyzstan demonstrates intention to retain its presence in CIS, particularly in Central Asia.” (Asia News, June 24)

The money from the U.S. is unlikely to alleviate the poverty of the majority in Kyrgyzstan. The government has been condemned both within and outside Kyrgyz borders as one of the most corrupt in the world. □

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African Union Summit discusses greater unity

Adopts positions on Sudan and Somalia

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Sirte, Libya, was host to the 13th African Union Summit held July 1-3. The AU, an organization representing all 53 independent states in Africa, held extensive discussions on how to build unity and cooperation on the continent.

Libya’s leader Muammar Qaddafi, who is the AU chairperson, utilized his experience and political clout to strongly advocate for the formation of a continental government. This has been a goal since the mid-1960s when the early independence leaders who were revolutionaries struggled against the onslaught of neo-colonialism, where the imperialist powers sought to control Africa even after its political liberation from colonialism.

This year’s summit was held amid a worsening global capitalist economic crisis that has plunged 53 million more Africans into poverty over the last two years. The AU debates reflected the ongoing struggle for unity and development.

No unified continental government was created this time. The AU did agree to transform the executive committee of the organization—the Commission—into an Authority comprised of a chair, vice chair and 10 secretaries. These officials’ specific portfolios will theoretically expand into institutional power over defense, diplomacy and international trade.

The Xinhua press agency reported July 4 that Qaddafi “held intensive bilateral and multilateral talks with African leaders during this summit, to persuade those who take different views to support the creation of the AU Authority.”

The report noted: “When meeting with South African President Jacob Zuma, the Libyan leader stressed that Tripoli and Pretoria play significant roles in boosting the AU development and establishing the new AU executive organ. During the meeting, Zuma conceded Libya’s efforts to set up the United States of Africa.”

In the summit’s aftermath, the Libyan leader expressed satisfaction with the efforts toward greater unity and cooperation.

Since the 1963 formation of the Organization of African Unity, renamed the African Union in 2002, the concept and demand for continental unity has been a consistent theme among progressive and revolutionary organizations and leaders. Kwame Nkrumah, the leader of the Ghana revolution that won national independence in 1957, stated repeatedly that African unity and socialism were the prerequisites for genuine economic empowerment and political stability.

OAU co-founder Nkrumah hosted the continental summit in Ghana in October 1965, just four months prior to his removal from office in a right-wing military and police coup backed and financed by the United States under the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson. During this summit, Nkrumah stressed the need to go beyond national independence toward a unified Africa that would oppose Western hegemony.

At the OAU Summit on Oct. 21, 1965, Nkrumah stated: “In spite of these resolutions and declarations, in spite of all good intentions, in spite of our plans, the naked fact, alas, is that Africa is still an impoverished continent, immobilized by the lack of political cohesion, harassed by imperialism and ransacked by neo-colonialism.” (“Revolutionary Path,” 1973, pp. 304-5)

The Ghanaian leader later said, “This is so because our unity is still incomplete and ineffective in the face of grave threats

to our existence. What use is it to us then that our continent is so rich in material and human resources? ... The OAU must face such a choice now—we can either move forward to progress through an effective African Union or step backward into stagnation, instability and confusion—an easy prey for foreign intervention, interferences and subversion.” (“Revolutionary Path,” p. 307)

AU on Sudan and Somalia

At this 13th AU Summit, the general consensus was to oppose the International Criminal Court warrants that have been issued against Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir and other leaders of that country. The AU passed a resolution of noncompliance with the ICC and accused the Western states of failing to take into consideration repeated calls by the AU to suspend the warrants against the Sudanese leaders.

Jean Ping of Gabon, chairperson of the AU Commission, told the media that the resolution of noncompliance affirms, “If you don’t listen to Africa and take our proposals into account, we are going to act unilaterally.” (VOA News, July 6)

A handful of Western-allied states expressed unease about the AU’s defiance toward the ICC and consequently the imperialist countries. Even though many other states, including the U.S., do not recognize the ICC’s authority, these same states use the warrants issued against Al-Bashir to weaken and pressure Sudan, Africa’s geographically largest nation-state and an emerging oil-producing nation.

Botswana Foreign Minister Phandu Skelemani said his government did not agree with the AU declaration, citing treaty obligations with the ICC. Also the French-backed government of Chad, which neighbors Sudan and is another oil-producing country, voiced displeasure with the AU position.

Regarding Somalia, the AU pledged additional support for the U.S.-backed Transitional Federal Government in Mogadishu. “We welcome the support of the recent AU heads of state summit in Libya for the government ... and we have a firm pledge for the increase of the AU peacekeepers,” Somali Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke told journalists in Mogadishu. (BBC, July 5)

The forces of the AU Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) have remained at 4,300 troops supplied by the U.S.-backed states of Uganda and Burundi. These troops have been accused of attacking civilians in urban areas, resulting in the displacement of 165,000 people from Mogadishu alone since May. The AMISOM forces fight alongside TFG units to prevent the

seizure of power by the Islamic resistance fighters of Al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam, who control large sections of the south and central regions of Somalia along with many areas within the capital.

Although a few other African states said they would send reinforcements to AMISOM, none has yet done so. The current U.S.-backed government in Somalia has made a direct appeal for intervention from neighboring African states as well as the “international community.”

Following TFG assurances it was getting greater AU support, Al-Shabaab rejected the notion of strengthening the AMISON mandate. “It is a chance for our mujahideen [holy warriors] to seize weapons from AMISON soldiers should they come out of their hideouts,” Al-Shabaab spokesperson Sheikh Ali Dhere told the July 5 Kenya Daily Nation.

“It will be a great chance for our fighters to test their fighting skills that will surely lead to the defeat of the foreign soldiers,” he added.

Al-Shabaab’s Sheikh Ali Dhere condemned the AU Summit leaders who met in Libya for discussing agenda items that work against the Somali people.

More importantly, despite the statements by the TFG government, the July 5 Kenya Daily Nation reported, “The AU Summit, however, did not conclude a resolution allowing the Amisom peacekeepers to directly support the TFG.”

Overshadowing the statements made during the AU, the U.S. pledged additional military support to the TFG. Undersecretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson said, “The U.S. is glad that the Africa Union and IGAD (the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development) did take up the issue of Somalia at the Summit in Libya and have taken a strong stance on the issue under their wings for close and careful consideration. The U.S. will continue to look for ways of providing support to the TFG (Transitional Federal Government). ... This will include military support in terms of arms and material resources but not manpower.” (Xinhua, July 4)

How U.S. imperialism stifles African unity

Washington’s constant attempts to both influence and dominate African affairs complicate the efforts aimed at unification. Although the AU defied the U.S. position on Sudan, it has been unable to effectively rebuke the Obama administration on the question of sovereignty and noninterference in the political situation in Somalia.

Since the Bush administration’s in-

volvement in Ethiopia’s invasion of Somalia between December 2006 and January 2009, the Horn of Africa region has been further militarized and destabilized. Many consider the humanitarian situation in Somalia the worst on the continent. At the same time, there is an ever-increasing presence of U.S. and NATO warships, along with vessels from other countries, in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean off the coasts of Somalia and Kenya.

Under the guise of fighting piracy, the imperialist states are poised for direct military involvement inside Somalia. In addition to the so-called anti-piracy campaign, the imperialists blame the Al-Qaeda organization for the advances of the Al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam forces that have taken over large sections of the country.

Both these Islamic resistance groups, however, have denied affiliation with Al-Qaeda. Their main motivating force has been a desire to rid Somalia of AMISOM units and the U.S.-backed government in Mogadishu.

The so-called pirates who patrol Somali waters say that imperialist states and multinational corporations are responsible for the destruction of the coasts and the fishing industry through illegal theft of sea life and dumping of toxic chemicals. No deaths took place in the seizure of vessels by the pirates until the U.S. Navy killed three Somali youths who had taken a ship under their control and were negotiating its release.

Workers and all nationally oppressed peoples in the United States are facing the worse economic crisis since the Great Depression in the 1930s. In Africa and other developing or so-called Third World countries, the global crisis in capitalism has relegated tens of millions more into poverty.

These conditions prevailing internationally provide opportunities for workers and oppressed in both Africa and North America to demonstrate solidarity in opposition to U.S. militarism and imperialism. Perpetual wars and destabilization efforts in Africa by the U.S. have not resulted in greater prosperity for workers in the U.S. In fact, resources utilized for imperialist wars contribute significantly to the decline in living standards among workers in the highly industrialized capitalist states.

Therefore, the defeat of world capitalism and imperialism can be achieved only through greater collaboration among the working and oppressed peoples throughout the world.

Azikiwe has traveled extensively in Africa and has followed developments related to the ongoing quest for development and unity on the continent. □

MUNDO OBRERO

Resistencia al golpe en Honduras

Continúa de página 12

que un golpe derechista eliminara los avances que los movimientos y gobiernos populares y progresistas han logrado en la región. Hasta los gobiernos latino-americanos menos progresistas denunciaron el golpe y demandaron la reinstalación inmediata de Zelaya.

Los países del ALBA y SICA prometieron retirar a sus embajadores de Honduras hasta que Zelaya sea reinstalado. Otras medidas que tomaron fue cerrar las fronteras con Honduras, congelar préstamos y fondos, incluyendo el financiamiento de eventos deportivos y culturales, además

de otras medidas que paralizarían al régimen golpista.

Hasta los grupos de trabajo de la OEA y de la ONU convocaron reuniones de emergencia donde condenaron el golpe. La OEA en su totalidad quedó en reunirse el 1º de julio en Washington, DC.

Casi todos los movimientos progresistas del mundo han condenado el golpe. La mayoría de los gobiernos se han opuesto públicamente. Brasil, Chile y México se unieron a los esfuerzos del ALBA y SICA para retirar a sus embajadores de Honduras. El ministro de relaciones exteriores de España dijo que va a recomendar acciones semejantes por la Unión Europea. Aún el

Presidente estadounidense, la Secretaria de Estado y el Embajador a Honduras han tenido que oponerse públicamente al golpe y reconocer a Zelaya como el único presidente hondureño.

El rol de los Estados Unidos es ambiguo. Debido a la conexión del Pentágono con el ejército hondureño, es dudoso que los hondureños hubieran podido actuar sin que personas importantes del gobierno estadounidense y del Pentágono lo supieran. El rechazo público del golpe por el Presidente Barack Obama, aunque leve—fue inusitado—y pone en tela de juicio la cuestión de quién en la clase dominante estadounidense formula la política de este país. □

Huelga general opone resistencia al golpe en Honduras

Movimiento popular masivo se opone al régimen militar

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

30 de junio—Unos 200 soldados del ejército hondureño fuertemente armados rodearon la casa del Presidente democráticamente elegido Manuel Zelaya en la madrugada del 28 de junio. Después de disparar contra la casa, los soldados irrumpieron en la residencia, apuntando sus armas a la cabeza y al pecho de Zelaya forzándole a montarse en un vehículo que lo llevaría a un avión con destino a Costa Rica.

Este flagrante golpe militar es un desafío para toda Latinoamérica progresista. Despertó una inmediata resistencia masiva de las organizaciones populares y un rechazo activo de los gobiernos progresistas de América Latina y organizaciones progresistas del mundo. El golpe no ha recibido ningún apoyo diplomático abierto mundialmente, ni siquiera de las reaccionarias potencias imperialistas.

Según una agencia de prensa cubana en su reporte desde Honduras “Los principales gremios, agricultores, organizaciones juveniles y sociales en Honduras están hoy en su segundo día de huelga contra el gobierno dictatorial en el país”. (30 de junio, Prensa Latina)

Zelaya ha prometido regresar a Honduras después de dirigirse a la Organización de Estados Americanos en Washington. El Secretario General de la OEA José Miguel Insulza, el Presidente de la Asamblea General de la ONU Miguel D’Escoto, la Presidenta de Argentina Cristina Fernández y el Presidente del Ecuador Rafael Correa le acompañarán.

Aunque las fuerzas golpistas han expedido una orden de arresto contra Zelaya si él regresa, todos los sectores sociales y progresistas están organizando una marcha masiva para darle la bienvenida.

¿Quien respalda el golpe?

Este golpe militar sirvió a los intereses de un pequeño grupo de adinerados oligarcas y a las fuerzas políticas derechistas pro-estadounidenses en Honduras que se oponen a la administración de Zelaya. Estos derechistas están en contra de las reformas que Zelaya ha estado implementando dirigidas a ayudar a la gente de bajos ingresos, las/os obreras/os y las/os desfavorecidas/os. Aborrecen la decisión de Honduras el año pasado de unirse a la Alternativa Bolivariana de las Américas (ALBA), una organización que promueve la cooperación regional que ya incluye a Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, las Granadinas, Nicaragua, San Vicente y Venezuela.

Los países miembros del ALBA se comprometen a trabajar para el beneficio de los pueblos, no para el de las corporaciones multinacionales, para poner los intereses del pueblo ante del lucro, para hacer que su lema sea la solidaridad en el comercio y la cooperación cultural, en deportes, ciencias y en todo tipo de esfuerzos, y para operar como un grupo que no compite entre ellos sino que buscan la integración de la región.

Esto contrasta muy agudamente con las relaciones comerciales con Estados Unidos, el mayor socio de la economía hondureña.

Zelaya tomó posición en el 2005. Y aunque procede del Partido Liberal de centro-derecha, ha tomado posiciones progresistas recientemente, e incluso ha expresado su solidaridad con la Revolución Cubana.

Hacia el golpe

Los conspiradores del golpe actuaron justo cuando se iba a conducir un sondeo. Era una encuesta no vinculante donde se le pedía a las/os votantes su opinión sobre si querían que en las próximas elecciones de noviembre hubiera una cuarta urna con la pregunta de cambiar o no la Constitución de Honduras. La encuesta era no vinculante porque la mayoría en la Legislatura, que está contra Zelaya, había aprobado una ley prohibiendo tener cualquier referéndum 180 días antes del fin del término presidencial del actual presidente y el término de Zelaya finaliza a comienzos del año 2010.

El pueblo de Honduras había enviado 400.000 firmas a la oficina del Presidente pidiendo un referéndum sobre el cambio de la actual Constitución, la cual perciben como inadecuada para las necesidades de la mayoría de la población.

El 24 de junio, Zelaya ordenó al Jefe de Estado Mayor General Romeo Vásquez, un graduado de la tristemente célebre Escuela de las Américas en los EEUU, distribuir el material de sufragio a los centros de votación en todo el país. Vásquez se negó, alegando que la consulta era “ilegal”. Zelaya ordenó entonces la destitución de Vásquez. Más tarde la Corte Suprema de Justicia, opuesta también a Zelaya, reintegró a Vásquez.

Las urnas que estaban almacenadas en una base aérea militar, luego fueron liberadas por el pueblo y por el mismo Zelaya.

Antes del golpe, muchos sectores aliados a la oligarquía, entre ellos miembros del Congreso, grupos de la oposición, el clero y los empresarios, le pidieron al pueblo que se quedara en casa y se abstuviera de votar.

Bajo ataque Zelaya y su gabinete

Cuando Zelaya llegó al aeropuerto en Costa Rica el 28 de junio, él y el presidente de Costa Rica Oscar Arias convocaron a una conferencia de prensa. Arias expresó su oposición al golpe y su solidaridad con Zelaya, quien por primera vez pudo denunciar públicamente el golpe.

Mientras en Tegucigalpa, la capital de Honduras, los militares perseguían a cada miembro/a del gabinete de Zelaya, quienes aún hoy se encuentran en situación de riesgo. El ejército rodeó la casa de la Canciller Patricia Rodas, quien llamó a los embajadores de Cuba, Nicaragua y Venezuela para protección. Cuando los militares irrumpieron en la casa, los embajadores abrazaron a Rodas para prevenir que las tropas le hicieran daño.

Los soldados los golpearon y se llevaron a Rodas y al embajador cubano con ellos. A la fuerza condujeron a Rodas a una base de la fuerza aérea llevándola luego a México. Al embajador cubano lo dejaron en medio de una carretera.



MO FOTO: JOAN MARQUARDT

San Francisco, 28 de junio

Resistencia del pueblo al golpe militar

Roberto Micheletti, presidente del Congreso Nacional y principal conspirador del golpe, rápidamente fue juramentado como el “nuevo presidente” de Honduras en lo que fue una repetición del golpe del 2002 contra el Presidente de Venezuela Hugo Chávez. Micheletti leyó una falsa “carta de renuncia” de Zelaya fechada el 25 de junio y con una firma falsificada. Unos minutos más tarde, Zelaya apareció en TeleSUR y CNN en Español desde Costa Rica diciendo que de ninguna manera había renunciado, sino que fue removido de su cargo por la fuerza.

Al enterarse del golpe, los movimientos sociales de Honduras comenzaron a reunirse frente al Palacio Presidencial en apoyo a Zelaya, rechazando al régimen golpista. Desafiaron el toque de queda impuesto por Micheletti y se quedaron toda la noche, prometiendo bloquear el camino para que el usurpador no llegara al palacio. El pueblo armó barricadas en varias calles que rodean el palacio, escribió grafiti en las paredes a favor de Zelaya y en contra de Micheletti, incendiaron neumáticos y estacionaron camiones de agua en frente del palacio presidencial.

Los sindicatos, estudiantes, mujeres y otros sectores sociales se movilizaron. Una efectiva huelga nacional se inició el 29 de junio y todas las escuelas se cerraron. Al día siguiente tres sindicatos importantes del sector público comenzaron una huelga general. Unos 100.000 trabajadores se sumaron a la huelga, de acuerdo a Oscar García, Vicepresidente de SANAA, el sindicato de trabajadores de acueductos y alcantarillados de Honduras. (CNN, 30 de junio)

Micheletti inició un reinado de terror, ordenando la dispersión de los manifestantes, por la fuerza si fuera necesario. El país fue militarizado. El ejército cerró los caminos, previniendo que grupos de indígenas y otros viajaran a Tegucigalpa para unirse a la resistencia.

La electricidad fue cortada en partes de Tegucigalpa, haciendo extremadamente difícil la comunicación telefónica y de Internet. El canal oficial de televisión fue cerrado al igual que otras estaciones que habían estado informando sobre el golpe. Sólo las cadenas privadas se encontraban en el aire, difundiendo programas de dibujos animados y otros que no tenían nada que ver con los hechos, reportando falsamente que el país estaba en completa calma.

Se intensificó la represión. Sobrevolaban helicópteros; tanques y tropas armadas fuertemente reforzaron al ejército y la policía fue movilizada. Las fuerzas armadas dentro del área del Palacio Presidencial comenzaron a marchar hacia las/os manifestantes que estaban al otro lado del cercado. Se podían oír disparos, y gases lacrimógenos fueron lanzados contra el pueblo desarmado. Al final del día 29 se reportó que una persona había muerto, más de 100 heridas/os, y más de 300 estaban encarceladas/os.

TeleSUR y los medios

TeleSUR, basada en Venezuela pero con recepción en toda Latinoamérica, fue el único medio masivo que consistentemente informaba al mundo sobre este horrible acontecimiento. Hasta CNN en Español mostró pietaje de TeleSUR. Esta lucha ha mostrado el rol decisivo de los medios progresistas. La comunidad internacional progresista pudo responder rápidamente debido a TeleSUR. Sus equipos de reporteras/os y camarógrafas/os valientemente transmitieron constantemente, entrevistando al pueblo en Tegucigalpa, y mostrando imágenes de la lucha que provocaban lágrimas de desaprobación.

Más tarde el 29 de junio, debido a su rol crucial en revelar este golpe criminal, miembros/os del equipo de TeleSUR fueron arrestadas/os, y sus teléfonos celulares y documentos personales fueron confiscados. Debido a la acción diligente de muchas personas que trabajan en los medios, y con la ayuda del embajador venezolano, el equipo de TeleSUR fue liberado y continuó la transmisión de noticias el día siguiente.

Líderes progresistas de Latinoamérica responden

El Presidente Rafael Correa del Ecuador y el Presidente Chávez de Venezuela declararon que nunca más un país latinoamericano será dejado en las manos de golpistas derechistas. El Presidente Daniel Ortega de Nicaragua rápidamente ofreció su país para ser sede de tres importantes conferencias de urgencia para debatir el caso de Honduras. Todas fueron convocadas para el 29 de junio, el día después del golpe. Primero se reunió la ALBA, luego el Sistema de Integración de Centroamérica (SICA), y al final del día el Grupo Rio, el cual consta de 24 naciones latinoamericanas y caribeñas. Estados Unidos no pertenece a ninguno de estos tres grupos.

Expresando urgencia, estos líderes estaban firmemente resueltos a prevenir

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